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RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE 0154
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE IMMEDIATE 9963
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO IMMEDIATE 8226
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 001184

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM PREL SOCI BR HO

SUBJECT: BRAZIL SHARES UPDATE ON SITUATION IN HONDURAS

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Classified By: Charge d' Affaires Lisa Kubiske, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Brazil's Ministry of External Relations (MRE) Head of Mexico and Central America Division First Secretary Renato de Avila Viana told Poloff on September 22 at 14:00 EDT that, with power and water cut off and 70 pro-Zelaya protesters now also trapped on the compound, the situation in Brazil's embassy in Tegucigalpa is becoming dire. (Note: Subsequent reports indicate that water and electricity have been restored.) Although they believe an invasion of the embassy by Honduran security forces is unlikely, MRE is concerned with the current vulnerability of their embassy and is hoping the USG can help supply its embassy and avoid violence. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Though it took several calls over the last two days to get through to Viana, he now seemed eager to talk and was unusually candid during the conversation that, with the situation changing quickly, he is only concerned with contacting the USG on the issue.

¶3. (C) The Charge spoke this afternoon with Brazilian presidency Foreign Policy Advisor Ambassador Marcel Biato to offer any coordination and assistance the GOB may need in dealing with the situation at their Embassy in Tegucigalpa. Biato thanked the Charge for the offer and indicated that the GOB was in touch with Washington and USG officials in New York on the issue. (Note: The top GOB leadership, including President Lula, Foreign Minister Amorim, and Presidential Foreign Policy Adviser Marco Aurelio Garcia, are currently in New York to attend UNGA, leaving MRE Deputy FM (Secretary General) Ambassador Samuel Guimaraes, Under Secretary for Latin America Enio Cordeiro, and Biato as the senior officials managing the issue in Brazil. End note.)

SITUATION AT THE BRAZILIAN EMBASSY IN TEGUCIGALPA IS GRAVE

¶4. (C) Viana explained that water, electricity, and phone lines to the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa had been cut and the Embassy was running solely on a diesel generator that was running out of fuel. As of 05:00 this morning the Honduran police and military cleared the streets surrounding the Brazilian Embassy of protestors. Seventy pro-Zelaya Honduran protestors sought refuge in the Brazilian Embassy

and remain there; Viana said that the protestors remain calm. Eight Brazilians from the Embassy were allowed to return home, leaving only the Charge and three other Brazilians at the Embassy. So far, the Honduran security forces have not intruded on the Brazilian Embassy, however Viana noted that the streets around the Embassy are full of security forces and it is clear that the Honduran strategy is to "asphyxiate the Embassy." The situation is grave, Viana explained, and the Brazilians in the Embassy and the MRE are concerned that the situation will escalate. Viana said that right now an invasion is improbable but not out of the realm of possibility.

GOB RESPONSE AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH THEIR EMBASSY

¶15. (C) The MRE and GOB are maintaining constant contact with the Brazilian Charge in Honduras and Zelaya via cellular phones and the Brazilian Embassy is also in contact with the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Viana reported. He recounted that Brazilian President Lula and Foreign Minister Amorim both called Zelaya this morning and requested that he contain his supporters and their protests to prevent confrontation with the Honduran security forces. He also said the Brazilian Ambassador in Washington had contacted the State Department this morning.

GOB REQUESTS US HELP

¶16. (C) According to Viana, the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa has asked the U.S. Embassy in Honduras for help in maintaining security at the Brazilian Embassy and for

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diesel fuel to run their generator. Viana said they would be in need of food and water, but were concerned that no one would be able to reach them with fuel and other basics since the streets were controlled by the Honduran security forces. Viana lamented that the Brazilian Embassy did not have "the type of protection the U.S. Embassy has, the Marines," because they are unable to defend the Embassy. Viana reiterated the message that the MRE and Brazilian Embassy have already passed to the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa and Washington, that the GOB is concerned with the vulnerability of their Embassy in Honduras and apprehensive of what may happen.

COMMENT: TAKEN BY SURPRISE, GOB TURNS TO THE USG

¶17. (C) The openness and availability of MRE officials today their open concern that the situation is worsening, along with Brazil's traditional reticence to take controversial positions or actions in the region, seem to confirm other reporting that that the Brazilians were taken by surprise by Zelaya and were unprepared to deal with the fallout. They clearly fear that the situation may get desperate quickly, and see the United States as key to acquiring immediate help and international assistance. Post will continue to seek updates from MRE on the situation and GOB plans.
KUBISKE